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ABSTRACT

"Options in Education" is a radio news program which focuses on issues and developments in education. This transcript contains discussions with Bruno Bettelheim on the importance of fairy tales for children, with Frank Williams on tensions in children when they try to create, and with Donald Bigelow on "Loudmouse" by Richard Wilbur, "Me" by William Saroyan, and "9 Magic Wishes" by Shirley Jackson. The program also includes "Death Knocks Twice" a melodrama produced by Lise Gerard, a senior in high school, and a free-form poem about a trip to Disneyland by Garla Olivia Alcorn. John Merrow and Wendy Blair are moderators. (JM)

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Program #33

FANTASY MAGAZINE

CS

National Public Radio

Options in Education

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 181 member stations of National Public Radio.

The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Producer is Midge Hart. The Associate Producer is Jo Ellyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

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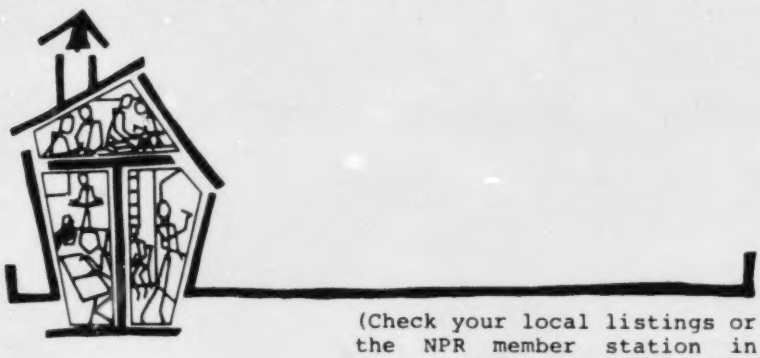

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(OPENING THEME)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

(MUSIC)

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues in education -- from the ABC's of preschool to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

MERROW: This is John Merrow. On this edition of OPTIONS IN EDUCATION we enter the world of childhood (BEGIN "FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD") through fantasy.

(MUSIC -- "FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD")

MERROW: Child Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim tells me about the real importance of fairy tales.

> BETTELHEIM: You cannot dismiss your child with a sad ending. He will have enough of sad in life. You don't have to worry about it. The reality of life will tell your child sooner or later that there's not always a happy ending.

MERROW: You'll hear a classic melodrama, courtesy of NPR's Young People's Radio Festival.

(MUSIC)

> MAN: (SINISTER LAUGH) David seems to have slipped. Why is he so concerned about papa's death? After all, it was a heart attack. Wasn't it? Ha - ha - ha - ha - ha

BLAIR: We're also going to learn about Loudmouse, the non-conforming mouse.

> MAN: With the Loudmouse, he got a reward because his own sense of noncomformity led him to catch the burglar and to get the cheese.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: Fairy tales, which really aren't about fairies, very often involve wicked witches, self-mutilation, and violent death.

BLAIR: And, before you say "yechh," all that grim and gruesome stuff may be important to your children.

> BETTELHEIM: So-called fairy tale literature is so vast that practically all human problems are presented, and their solutions.

BLAIR: That's Child Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, who believes that so-called fairy stories allow young children to gradually come to grips with the contradictions in human nature and in themselves. That therapeutic idea is at the heart of the famous tale of "1001 Nights," in which Scheherazade protects her life by telling, night after night, tales of such charm and beauty that she eventually not only enchants the king, but also liberates him. We join Dr. Bettelheim at this point in his conversation with John.

DR. BRUNO BETTELHEIM: The pretense was that she told it to her little sister and the king just listened in. But he became so curious about the story, because she ended it in the middle, that he spared her life to hear the end of the story. And after 1001 nights, more over three years, of course, they fell in love with each other and got happily married.

But the interesting thing is that the frame story of "1001 Nights" says, by listening to fairy stories, by listening to folk tales, even the most severe friction of the soul, if we may say, can be cured.

MERROW: And you believe that in fairy tales there is some, not necessarily cure for the affliction, but certainly some real help to the adjustment of children to achieving some kind of adult identity?

BETTELHEIM: Yes, that is why I wrote this book, because I think nothing can compare with the fairy tale literature to help young children with the problems they encounter in living and growing up.

MERROW: I'd like you to be really specific on that. In what way are fairy tales helpful to young kids? I mean, given that there are some common elements -- there's the evil witch, or there's the riddle -- in what way are those things actually helpful to young kids?

BETTELHEIM: As every child, boys and girls alike, at certain moments in their life feel like Cinderella -- and that's why Cinderella is one of the most popular of fairy tales -- every child, compared to other fields, says too much is demanded of them, he or she is much neglected -- the menial tasks assigned to her, whether it's cleaning up the kitchen or taking out the garbage or washing the dirty dishes after the meal or whatever else the chores of the child, both boy and girl, might be in the home.

If you remember Cinderella, there's a stepmother --

MERROW: It's not a mother -- it's a stepmother.

BETTELHEIM: It's a stepmother -- it's always a stepmother. And this is very important, because every child -- we all have a good and a bad mother and whenever we grow up, the all-giving mother of early infancy, who didn't demand anything of her infant, who took always good care of the infant, becomes a mother who starts to make demands, who starts to be critical. The mother does it much more than the father -- this is a terrible, terrible disappointment to the child. The child, in order to be able to hold on to the image of the good mother, has a fantasy that the good mother was replaced by a bad mother, because in this way, behind the bad mother who so painfully criticizes the child, is retained the image of the good mother.

Now, let me go back to Cinderella for a moment because there it is most beautifully, in my opinion, elaborated. As every child knows from the story, although unfortunately in the Walt Disney version you wouldn't guess it so, the crucial element in the Cinderella story is first, the abuse by the stepsisters, and that she plants a twig on the grave of her dead mother and cultivates it with her prayers and her tears. And this twig grows into a big beautiful tree, and on this tree alights the birds which satisfy all her wishes and finally give her the beautiful clothes and the beautiful slippers with which she goes to the ball.

So, actually what the fairy story says, despite your image of your bad mother, who mistreats and abuses you, if you cultivate inside of you and keep alive the image of the good mother, that will sustain you, even in the worst adversity. And no deeper psychologically correct image was ever created by any psychoanalyst or anybody who studies children.

And, now talking about Cinderella, there are other elements. You might ask why does Cinderella go to the ball three times? Once would be enough, wouldn't it? No -- because she doesn't want to simply become the bride of the prince, because of her beauty or because of the beautiful clothes. She insisted in the Grimm version which comes closest to the original version -- of course, there are many, many versions all over the world of Cinderella -- a ration quota is a Scotch version of the same story -- she always insisted that the prince sees her in her dejected state. She doesn't want to be married or selected because of externals, as her foolish sisters, who dress up to the ball and want to do all with their beautiful and expensive clothes and jewelry. She wants to be seen in her dejected state and selected in it for the person she is and not for the external appurtenance -- shall we say, the conspicuous consumption with which she was equipped by the birds.

Now, it is the birds on the tree which give her these beautiful clothes to which she returns these clothes at the end of the ball. But, it's also the birds in the original version which tell the prince, who incidentally is a dope, as many male figures are dopes, as many male figures are very brilliant in fairy tales -- the same for boys as girls. The idea that only the girls are passive are simply to do with those fairy stories which are told by parents today. There are thousands of fairy stories in which girls are extremely active, heroic, and ingenious.

As a matter of fact, it is Gretel who frees Hanzel and who overcomes the witch.

MERROW: I want to come back to Hanzel and Gretel, but the point of Cinderella is not just the psychological truth of the good mother-bad mother idea, but also some kind of moral lesson in there about growing up and about being appreciated for what you are, rather than what you look like.

BETTELHEIM: That's right. For those two sisters I need it, because the two sisters try to pretend they have small feet and both in the British version and in the German version of the Brothers Grimm, and many versions all over the world, they mutilate their feet to make them fit into the slipper. So, they pretend -- they are false. They are not only stupid -- they are also false. They are vicious -- they try to cheat Cinderella. And the prince is so stupid that he doesn't see, but the birds tell him that this is the wrong bride, and there's blood in the shoe. And then he returns first to one sister and then the second sister, and only then he insists on seeing Cinderella and recognizes her as the person who's worthy of his love.

MERROW: That is left out of the Walt Disney version.

BETTELHEIM: Of course, because self-mutilation is a very important element, because it shows that while you might change the externals, you cannot change your soul or your character. The punishment of the two sisters is that they, although not being invited, go to the wedding to get back in the good graces of Cinderella, which is awfully stupid of them -- they should stay away from her.

But, Cinderella doesn't punish them -- that's not necessary because on the way to church -- or to the wedding, the birds settle on the shoulders -- the right shoulders of them and hack out the right eye. On the way back from the church, they settle on the left shoulder and hack out the left eye of the two sisters. So, they are punished but in symbolic forms that really mean these two sisters were blind to the important things in life all along. So that what this is really is less a punishment than a statement of their blindness and their stupidity; that they thought that by pushing Cinderella down they could promote themselves.

MERROW: Now, Dr. Bettelheim, you told the story as it is in many of the original versions. Can you understand why parents would say, "I don't want to tell my child the story in which people get their eyes pecked out by birds -- a story in which people mutilate their feet in order to fit them into tiny shoes." Can you understand why parents might want to take stuff like that out?

BETTELHEIM: Yes, but that only shows that they don't understand the mind of the young child.

MERROW: Why is that violence important to young children?

BETTELHEIM: It's not violence as such; it is that they feel that their own security --that small child security --since he cannot protect himself depends on the evil people being punished and the good rewarded. Otherwise, there is no security for him in this world. And in this primitive sense, the punishment has to fit the crime. Since the sisters were blind to the important things in life, the punishment is that they are blinded for the rest of their lives.

MERROW: It seems to me that you quote in the book Chesterton talking about how adults prefer mercy whereas children, in their innocence, chose justice.

BETTELHEIM: Well, I don't like to go into the topic of the innocence of children. We also have to realize that children have no conception of death. There are many fairy stories where people die and then come to life again. Which shows that if somebody gets killed in the fairy story that it isn't necessarily the end because the child has no conception of death and, as a matter of fact, his fear of death is mitigated by the idea that people can die and come alive as the fairy story tells.

BLAIR: Dying and coming back to life -- we have a modern version for you before coming back to John's conversation with Dr. Bruno Bettelheim. This melodrama of revenge and a return from the grave won first prize during NPR's Young People's Radio Festival this year. We'll tell you more later, when, if, we return from "Death Corner".

(MUSIC AND LIGHTNING)

NARRATOR: Good evening. This is your host, Rip Corrigan, welcoming you to my favorite place to visit, Death Corner.

(MORE MUSIC AND LIGHTNING)

NARRATOR: Death knows no end or bounds and to prove this, we bring you the tale of that which cannot be conquered by even death itself. Revenge! Tonight's tale is "Death Knocks Twice".

(KNOCK AT DOOR)

NARRATOR: Let's listen and enjoy--shall we?

(SINISTER LAUGH)

(DOOR KNOCK - FOOTSTEPS UPSTAIRS - DOOR OPENING)

MAN: Whew! What a night!

WOMAN: Where have you been? You don't know what's been happening. It's my mother, she...

MAN: Do you have to start on that so soon? I've just come home from a hard day's work and all I want is some peace and quiet. Is that too much to ask? Lord knows, I never get enough of that around here. First, it's you, and then it's your mother.

WOMAN: Yes, David, my mother. It was worse today. She's never been like this before.

DAVID: Did she climb the walls or did she try to jump out the window? Come on, Nora, what's so frightening about your mother? She's just an old lady who can't face the reality of her husband's death.

NORA: Oh...

DAVID: So, if she talks to him once in awhile...big deal. It'll keep her occupied and out of your hair for awhile. So why make a fuss?

NORA: David, she did more than just talk to him today. I was in her room this morning clearing away the dishes. She had all the drapes closed the way she does when she talks to Poppa. I wasn't really paying attention to her babbling, then...Oh, David, the room...it felt as if...as if a shroud had covered it. David, I felt him there.

DAVID: Good gosh, you are getting as bad as her.

NORA: David, I'm serious. It was as if...no, she was. She was engaged in a conversation with him...with Poppa. She responded to questions I couldn't hear. She listened to stories I could feel being told in anger and hate and almost revenge.

DAVID: If you couldn't hear what was being said, how could you possibly know this?

NORA: I felt it, David. Hatred and revenge are something that you feel, not hear.

DAVID: Oh, gee...

NORA: I listened to her talk...it was so frightening. (Mimicking her mother now) "How could you have done such a thing...come soon ...come soon...there's nothing...Do you see?" That's all she's been saying since this morning. It's as if...as if she's waiting... waiting for him. Oh, David, what are we going to do? I'm so scared. (Mimicking mother again) "He's coming...he's coming"

DAVID: I'm going to call a doctor.

(SOUND OF BELL)

NORA: What will you say?

DAVID: I'll just tell him that your mother's worse. She's hallucinating and she needs help. He'll come over and give her a sedative that'll calm her down. Then, in the morning, we'll get some paper together...

NORA: No! I won't have her put away! She's my mother and I love her. I won't let you do it!

DAVID: Now, Nora, let's be reasonable.

NORA: (Sigh) David, I promised myself I'd take care of her after Poppa died. It's only been a little over a year since his sudden death. It was such a shock to her. And, we just can't put her into the hands of strangers who don't understand.

(MUSIC)

NARRATOR: Why is David so anxious to have Nora's mother committed? Is it because he is so concerned for her? Or, is it himself he is worried about? What does Dave have to hide? Are the hallucinations nothing more than delerious thoughts...or are they real? To find out, let's return to David and Nora. David is just finishing his hurried call to the doctor who has agreed to come and see Nora's mother tonight.

DAVID: (Into telephone) See you soon, then, Doctor. Thank you. Goodnight.

NORA: When will he be here?

DAVID: Soon enough. I'm going to check in on your mother.

NORA: Maybe you'll see for yourself what I mean.

(MUSIC - DAVID ASCENDS STAIRS)

DAVID: My God! Why did you open the windows? (David closes windows) Mother, are you all right? Is something wrong?

MOTHER: I know about it all, David.

DAVID: Know what?

MOTHER: Poppa told me about...you. He's coming, David. Poppa's coming. He's coming for you.

DAVID: But...I don't know what you're talking about. You really haven't been making too much sense lately.

MOTHER: Don't play games with me, David. I may be guilty of daydreaming and doing a little talking to myself, but, I'm not past the point of reason.

DAVID: Nora told me of your conversation with Poppa. He's dead. You can't talk to a dead man.

MOTHER: Are you trying to convince yourself? I know how he died... and so do you.

DAVID: He had a heart attack. I made sure of that...

(SUSPENSEFUL MUSIC)

(SINISTER LAUGH)

NARRATOR: David seems to have slipped. Why is he so concerned about Poppa's death? After all, it was a heart attack...wasn't it? (Laughter)

DAVID: I...I made...I made sure when I talked to the doctor. He had a bad heart. The attack was brought on by that.

MOTHER: He's coming for you...you'll know. Death knocks twice.

DAVID: You really are crazy! You've gotta be committed! I've called the doctor and he's on his way.

MOTHER: So is Poppa...

DAVID: The doctor will be here first! What am I saying...the dead don't walk or talk.

MOTHER: That's what you hope.

DAVID: I had to do it. He was old and useless. He wouldn't let me run the business the way I wanted it to be done. Don't you see?

MOTHER: You stole from the company.

DAVID: I borrowed! But he wouldn't understand...he couldn't. He was too old. He...he wasn't needed.

MOTHER: So...you induced a heart attack.

DAVID: It was so easy.

MOTHER: He'll be here, now...soon...very soon. You'll know.

(CRASH)

DAVID: Now, look, you old bag...see what you made me do? You just keep your mouth shut. I...I've had enough of this!

MOTHER: So have I.

DAVID: What are you going to do? No one will believe you. You know that. You're just a senile old lady who's going to be committed very soon. No one will listen to you.

MOTHER: It doesn't matter, Poppa will take care of you...He's so close now...

DAVID: Stop it! Stop it! A dead man can't take revenge. Dead is dead! It's impossible for the dead to come back and take revenge.

(LIGHTNING)

MOTHER: Or, so you think. He's here...now.

(KNOCKING SOUND)

DAVID: (In a whisper) The knock...it came twice!

(DOOR CREAKING OPEN--HOWLING WIND --KNOCKING SOUNDS)

DAVID: No...no! My God...no! No...(choking sound)

(WIND AND CREAKING SOUND - MUSIC)

NARRATOR: Is revenge stronger than death itself? The dead can't come back to walk, can they? After all...dead is dead, right? Try and tell yourself that tonight...(SINISTER LAUGHTER)

MERROW: That spine-tingler, "Death Knocks Twice" was produced by Lisa Gerard in her senior year of high school in Lakewood, Ohio. Her public radio station is WKSU in Kent, Ohio.

BLAIR: Miss Gerard's melodrama meets a couple of Bruno Bettelheim's criteria, I think. It's clearly a fantastic tale and justice, not mercy, is shown. But I think the original fairy tales are scarier. Let's rejoin John and Dr. Bettelheim as they discuss "Hansel and Gretel".

MERROW: In the cleansed version, Hanzel and Gretel simply get lost. Now, in the Grimm's fairy tale version, it's the step mother who persuades the stupid husband that there's not enough food and that the only way they'll survive is if they get rid of the children. So, they go lose them deliberately once; and then they find their way back. Then, they lose them again and the second time it works. But it's a deliberate act.

BETTELHEIM: Yes, well, there for example, since you mentioned "Hanzel and Gretel" it's even more complicated. First, let's establish that all children have the starvation fear...that the fear of all children -- I will not get enough food...I will be deserted by my parents -- and it also holds in the story that it will not do if you think you can hang on to mother's apron strings all your life. You have to learn to think and act for yourself. And which forces the children to think and act for themselves and become intelligent and self-reliant. As soon as they become intelligent and self-reliant, they even can overcome the evil witch - the powerful, evil witch. This is part of the story. You can't just stay home all of your life. There is a time to grow up - as much as you dislike growing up - because the children return home and try to rely on the parents.

MERROW: In "Hanzel and Gretel" -the version I saw, Dr. Bettelheim, they just escaped from the witch but they don't kill her.

BETTELHEIM: That's right. That doesn't fit in the sense of justice of the children. But, you see, there is more to it. It's not just justice, that is, in order to live happily, I think we all would live happier, if there would be no evil in the world. So, the ending of the fairy story is not so much the punishment of the evil but that evil is done away with - evil no longer exists in the world. As long as the witch, so to say, is alive there is always danger. Security is only when evil is permanently done away with and that is how the child experiences it. But, there is another element in "Hanzel and Gretel", and that is the element that tells if you give in to your desire to devour - if you cannot control it - you get into big trouble. Don't forget, the witch become a witch only after the children eat up her house. In the original fairy story, the witch warns them and said, "Who is nibbling on my house?" The children lied to her, I think Hanzel says, "It's only the wind." Remember? So the witch turns only into a witch after the children have tried to eat her out of house and home. And that is even more interesting because the story begins with the stepmother's anxiety that the children will eat them out of house and home. So, the interesting thing is a poetic justice here. The children, accused of eating their parents out of house and home, have not learned that you must not do that. The witch teaches them because the witch, whose house is eaten up by the children, said, "If you eat my house, then I'm going to eat you." And, then the children see the light - that we must not devour; we must not stuff ourselves irrespective of the needs, the legitimate rights of others.

BLAIR: Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, discussing his new book "The Uses of Enchantment".

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Do children really understand the hidden meanings in fairy tales? Here's Dr. Bettelheim with more on fairy tales - the Oedipus complex and today's television.

MERROW: You've talked about what these fairy tales mean and explained in a beautiful symbolism the really intricate, well-wrought meanings in them. Do children really understand what Cinderella is saying or what the story of Hansel and Gretel is saying?

BETTELHEIM: The answer is, as often in life, yes and no. They cannot lay out for themselves in very short form as I tried do do for you more completely in my book. It took a book just to do it for a few fairy stories and I could have gone on with that indefinitely.

MERROW: Should a parent explain that to a child?

BETTELHEIM: No, certainly not because that is an adult, parental explanation . The child functions on a preconscious level; the younger the child it is more so. For example, are your own children boys or girls?

MERROW: I have almost an eight year old son and the five year old is a girl.

BETTELHEIM: I would imagine...I would hope, at least...that your son at one time proposed to your wife and that your girl proposed to you, kind of, and suggested that the two of you might very well make a go...(laughter) Is that right?

MERROW: Yes, that is right.

BETTELHEIM: All right, now. This is a fantasy of all children. But, it's, of course, the fantasy that is very understandable but completely unrealistic. The fairy story which tells, let's talk about the boy for a moment, that he will grow up and be the perfect knight or will slay the dragon and free the beautiful maiden held captive. Well, I'm sorry to say that you were the evil dragon and your wife was the beautiful maiden held captive by you and preventing your beautiful young son from winning her. That says, despite what I feel really, this will be acted out by me in a far away land, not with my father, not with my mother, so that I don't get into conflict with them, but I will get the beautiful maiden, I will slay this evil dragon and he gets it all out pre-conscious, very safe figures. He doesn't have to fight it out with his own parents. That is what the fairy story permits. It permits all these fantasies in a never-never land - not next door as the television shows. There is no danger in the streets. There is danger only in the land of witches. Well, I don't have to go into the land of the witches during the day if I don't want to, but I can have fantasies about it. In this way, in my fantasy, get fantasy satisfaction, get out my aggression in fantasy. If I think I am Cinderella and I am mistreated by my evil sisters - but, by golly they will be punished someday and by-golly I will surpass them someday, then I can suffer their superiority in the right here and now without being defeated by it.

MERROW: What's the danger if the child doesn't have that kind of fantasy outlet?

BETTELHEIM: Well, you know, if we are hard pressed to deal with our inner pressures, our inner difficulties...if we don't have any fantasy satisfaction...

MERROW: I feel the same way, even now.

BETTELHEIM: That's right! I mean we all need this. After all, if you have a bad day with your boss, you know, and you go home muttering to yourself you have a fantasy of knocking him down. Having this fantasy to knock him down, you are satisfied. You don't have to be nasty to him in reality which might be beneficial to you. So, the child can think, "Oh, this is just the stepmother who miscreats me. And, really, if just my good mother would have stayed with me everything would be perfect." Well, then, you can live with the stepmother.

MERROW: You metioned television, Dr. Bettelheim, and there's certainly a lot of violence on television. Why not simply let the kid watch all the violent shows and let them act out their fantasies there.

BETTELHEIM: Well, the danger is that television supposedly represents reality. If all this violence is next door, it's very scary and life is very unpleasant. But if it's only in fairy lands that the child enteres for a few hours when he wants to - when he feels like it - then, of course, life is much safer. I don't want to say for a moment that realistic stories shouldn't be told to children. But realistic stories should not have the gruesomeness or the fantastic elements because that's a difference between reality and fantasy. What I object to is that so many of these stories for children today, which look like real stories, have all these fantasies and cruel elements in them which makes them very scary. It happens right here and now and not in never-never land or over the seven mountains and across the seven seas.

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Bruno Bettelheim doesn't object to realistic stories for children - just violent realistic ones. There's one type of fantasy tale he particularly objects to though, and that's the one that places impossible demands upon a child. Listen, and if you grew up when I did, I think you'll be surprised, at least, I think you will, I think you will, I think you will...

MERROW: There's one story that I don't think I'll ever be able to read to my children again and that's the story of the "Little Engine that Could". (Laughter) Maybe you would explain why I feel that way.

BETTELHEIM: Well, as I probably said, "Little Engine that Could", gives the child the erroneous opinion that if he just tries hard enough, he will succeed. That is the moral of this story and that's why it was written. The danger is that the child tries and tries and tries again things which are beyond his power and thinks he ought to succeed like the little engine but he does not. The fairy story always says that you need a helper. You see, the fairy story always starts with an impasse in living - a real difficult problem. The hero struggles manfully with it. If Cinderella wouldn't accept some of her suffering, in good cases, she wouldn't have received the helper. As a matter of fact, some other Cinderella stories from Egypt, from the Orient, are even much more explicit that it is the survival of the image of the dead mother that supports Cinderella in her distress. In some, the mother, the dead mother, the good mother, appears in her dreams and hands her the clothes. In general, I would say, we all need internalized images of protectors and of helpers in order to be able to survive in the difficulties of life. Fairy stories tell that suggest to the child that he has to go out into the world and struggle very hard and, if he does so, he will find a helper who will give him direction. As a matter of fact, one of the most famous Turkish fairy stories has a hero who is deserted also by the stepmother, also sent out into the world

in a boat and has all kinds of terrible adventures. He has a bird who is his helper and always in the middle of a crisis the bird says "Never forget, you have a friend...you are never alone." This is very assuring to the child that they are never alone. Well, you know, there used to a guardian angel in which children believed. and was very useful.

MERROW: It sounds as if we in this culture of ours have taken a giant step backwards. We now have television which babysits and tells stories and there is evidence that the stories which the television is telling are not very good ones anyway. You have come along and said that they are really very bad ones and there are these much better ones that parents should be telling their kids...not the "cleansed" version, but the real version to help the parents and to help the kids.

BETTELHEIM: You know, a few years ago, you remember, you are old enough, there was a lot of talk about the generation gap. I never believed that because I never experienced it, but there is still a lot of alienation between parent and children. While I don't believe in the generation gap, I do know that one of the most bitter complaints of many young people is that they have no contact with their parents or that their parents have no contact with them. Of course, the more we do together and enjoy together and I'm not saying just tell your child a fairy story because it's good for the child--that would be deadly. If you can't enjoy doing it then the child cannot gain much benefit from it. These are the eternal problems of life, of growing up, of overcoming difficulties, of dealing with enemies and we all have these problems. In imaginary, in poetic form, I would say, in the true fairy story it all enriches us.

MERROW: What if I go home and read my son and daughter "Cinderella" and "Hansel and Gretel" and scare the bloody hell out of them?

BETTELHEIM: Yes. That is very important what you say. Now, firstly, you must watch your child and see which fairy story your child enjoys and which not. There is also something else. Nothing is more constructive to everybody than the experience that something that created anxiety, in which he was afraid, to later find out that it was not justified but that it turns out that it's a pleasure. That is, it's quite possible that on first hearing a fairy story, the child is so captivated by some of the gruesome elements that he overlooks the happy ending. That is why any true fairy story must have a happy ending. That is why, for example, some beautiful tales by Hans Christian Anderson, like "The Match Girl" are beautiful tales, but they are not fairy stories because they have a very sad ending. You cannot dismiss your child with a sad ending. He will have enough of that in life. You don't have to worry about it. The reality of life will tell your child sooner or later that there is not always a happy ending. But, we must instill in our children hope and that is what the fairy story does and he needs the dangerous elements because, if there was no danger, the hope is not anything that really offers satisfaction.

MERROW: It sounds to me as if you are helping to keep yourself young by enjoying fairy stories, too.

BETTELHEIM: Well, I'm not exactly young, but, I enjoy them... that's all there is to it. They meant a great deal to me in my childhood and I found that working with very, very disturbed children, that nothing gives more opportunity for hope and developing a more optimistic view of life, particularly where there are children who have difficulties, because the heroes of fairy stories

run into tremendous difficulties. They all are victorious in the end.

MERROW: I hope that people listening to this will go to the library and get Grimm's Fairy Tales and then go to the book store and get your new book, which is, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales.

I hope the next time you are in Washington you will come tell some fairy tales to my children.

BETTELHEIM: Well, that would be a lovely idea.

MERROW: Thank you very much, Dr. Bruno Bettelheim.

(MUSIC: Theme from "The Wizard of Oz")

BLAIR: Dr. Bettelheim said that there's no need to force children to confront harsh reality too early. Here's how one young child's trip to the fantasy world of Disneyland turned into a disappointment.

Carla Olivia Alcorn

We're on our way to California - Mickey Mouse and movie stars.
We drove all day - pretty mountains, pretty grass, pretty trees.
But this gets monotonous - let's find a motel quick.
I'm sick of going to the bathroom in gas stations.
It's starting to rain.
Huh! Very good - a perfect end to a perfect day.
A motel! A Motel! - My queendom for a motel.
The sign said: 'Holiday Inn - 44 miles."
It's getting dark and the storm clouds don't help a bit.
I'm bored, wet and hungry.
I was car sick yesterday.
The rain pounds on the car roof and makes a mockery of the efforts of the windshield wipers.
Is that the Holiday Inn?
Daddy braves the torrents to get us a room.
Hurry! Hurry! - I'm seein' mirages.
Can you see mirages if you're not in a desert?
A warm bed with thick blankets dances before me.
Daddy's coming back.
There's no room.
Give it up.
We're here anyway, at last.
A Ramada Inn
Daddy goes in again in quest of a key.
He returns - no key, no room, no warmth, no bed.
But, I thought, you know, the reservation.
"I knew it," Daddy said, "as soon as they find out your color, they're full."
Color what, Daddy, I wondered.
I was only eight.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: That free-form verse by Carla Olivia Alcorn was one of the winners in the creative writing contest conducted every year by member station WBEZ in Chicago.

BLAIR: But what leads a child to create? Why did Carla want or need to tell that story? Educational Psychologist Frank Williams believes

that conflict produces creativity. He explains to reporter Bill Seimering of KCCM in Morehead, Minnesota.

DR. FRANK WILLIAMS

WILLIAMS: They have two different kinds of value systems. I call them paradoxical people, or people in conflict, because they fight conflict between this way and that way. Two are predominant within the creative value system, and this is the aesthetic value system; the love for beauty and anything, you know, that is "jazzed up", or just elegant and beautiful.

But the other one which is in conflict is the theoretical -- and this is ... okay, so it is beautiful, and I must make it pretty; it's got to be great -- it also has to be functional and practical and workable, and somebody has to buy it, and need it and want it, and it has to solve a practical problem. And this is where the creative person kind of gets into trouble, because he wants to deal in this fantasy of the artistic, and yet he has to deal in the theoretical of the functionality of something.

SEIMERING: In the past, we've had that notion that people must adjust; that it's important to be adjusted somehow, and yet creativity, really, requires, then, a lack of adjustment, perhaps; that is, that there is a conflict; that ...

WILLIAMS: I don't say lack of adjustment -- I would say a readjustment. And this goes back to Otto Rank's pyramid where the adapted, or the adjusted, or the conforming man is on the bottom of this ladder system. The creative, self-actualized person is on the top, and he has been successful in readjusting his life through the conflict, or neurotic stage, solving these paradoxes that we've been talking about, adequately enough to ease the stress and strain in his own personal life, which would take him, then, to the self-actualized part.

SEIMERING: But you can't get to the self-actualized part from the conforming part without going through some conflict.

WILLIAMS: I'm afraid not; no, I think this is all what the literature and the research shows. Teaching was supposed to have been a process, you know, to make kids comfortable; don't upset them, make them at ease and able to cope and handle things in here, because their life out there is so uncomfortable. I don't really believe that true learning or optimum learning can occur; that you're going to have to upset the child -- make him curious, pose problems for him to tackle, challenge him with intellectual curiosities, and so forth, which puts him immediately in the neurotic or conflict stage. But, if he can resolve the problem his own way, then, you see, he raises himself to self-actualized or creative stage.

Frank Baron's book, Creativity and Mental Health, points out that a highly creative person is neurotic, is obnoxious, does have many psychological hangups, is maladjusted ... and the whole thing, but, he also points out that they have much more psychological resources; inner resources to deal with this maladjustment than the less creative person, so the more creative person can accomodate, because they have this high tolerance for ambiguity, and so this isn't really a malfunction, or a misplaced problem to them; all it is is a hurdle that they attempt to resolve, and they can resolve it.

BLAIR: Dr. Frank Williams, an Educational Psychologist from Oregon, talking with reporter Bill Seimering, from station KCCM. Since we've been talking so much about children, creativity and ancient stories, we decided to ask our book reviewer, Donald Bigelow, to review a book on one of those three subjects. As usual, he outdid himself, and us. Here's his review on three of the books on all three subjects.

DONALD BIGELOW

BIGELOW: These are three of the many books I read to my son as he was growing up. I won't try to judge the results yet; one by Shirely Jackson, who wrote The Lottery, one by William Saroyan, who -- among other things, wrote The Human Comedy, and one by Richard Wilber, a poet who has written alot of things ... Digging for China; alot of poetry. Shirely Jackson's book called Magic Wishes, are nine magic wishes, and it really illustrates numbers, and wishes and dreams -- but the theses of both the Saroyan book called Me and the Richard Wilber book called Loudmouse, are just ...

MAN: Did you say "Loudmouse" or "Loudmouth"?

BIGELOW: Well, that's because you're thinking of me, I know (laughs) -- but I said Loudmouse, and Loudmouse is one of the little mice of three or four, all of whom are being told by Mother Mouse to be very quiet because there's a cat in the house. And each of the mice say "I hear you, mother ... I hear you mother" ... but loudmouse says "I HEAR YOU, MOTHER!" And then he goes all through the house all the time being a loud mouse ... uh, let me just read you a section, here:

"But Loudmouse could not learn to talk in a quiet way; he wanted to be nice and do what his mother told him, but every time he said anything, he made a great, big noise. One night the people who own the house were sitting in the living room, and Mr. Doud said, "Jane, I think there must be a lion in that wall." "A lion, dear?" said Mrs. Doud. "Oh, you're just being funny ... there isn't room for a lion inside that wall." "Well," said Mr. Doud, "Something inside that wall just made a very loud noise. Didn't you hear it?" And it goes on to tell about Loudmouse who ultimately, cause he's a loudmouse, catches the burglar. And so they feed him all the cheese he wants forever and ever.

Let me take just one minute about Saroyan. This is perhaps the most famous of all the books that I've ever read. This is called Me. Once upon a time, there was only one word -- me. If you wanted to say here I am, you said - me. And that's how it was when you wanted to say give me the orange or look at the tree, or what is the moon, or listen to the bird. It was the only word you ever heard. Some people said it in a loud voice. Some people said it in a soft voice. Some laughed; some cried; some giggled; some sighed. Only people said it. Animals said other things. The pigs said "hunka chunka pumpkin pie -- you will watch me get fat, but you will never see me fly." The caterpillar said "I was never a cat." The butterfly said, "What I was, I'll never know -- watch me stop -- watch me go, unafraid in light or shade." The fish said, "Hush in the water -- I'm waiting for a letter from my only daughter." A little bit of T.S. Eliot, perhaps. The white rose and the red rose say things. The lamp post said, "I'm the most from coast to coast." The train said, "Watch me go to Buffalo." The people went on saying the only word they knew how to say -- Me. And then the book develops if there was a me, then there was an I. And then if there was an I, there was a U. And if there was one, there was two. And so on and on into the night.

MERROW: From upside down it looks like a very attractive book too -- beautiful pictures.

BIGELOW: They're not only very attractive books. They're illustrated by great people. I don't have time to tell you each illustrator; and they were called A Modern Masters Book for Children. The Crowell-Collier Press put them out about ten years ago. I think if I had any real point other than the joy of just reading these, and having saved them from the mice in our attic, by the way, it is that I do a lot of preaching, not against the school, but to say that we mustn't expect the school to do everything, even though they do some things badly. But those things that they do well, they only do well, because you and I read to our children at night.

MERROW: I think it's also just fascinating that you have three very talented people -- Shirley Jackson, William Saroyan, and Richard Wilber, known for something other than children's books, using their overflow talents, if you will, to write what apparently are entertaining and fine children's books.

BIGELOW: Right. And I think that would sum up the general sense that we have both a sense of the gift of the artist being given to parents to give to their children through, still, the written word.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: Thanks very much. Our book reviewer, Donald Bigelow.

(MUSIC -- "Lifeline")

BLAIR: Every week we talk to you, but you never get much chance to tell us what we're doing wrong (or right, for that matter). So, we've asked a research firm to design a questionnaire for our audience.

MERROW: We'd like to have as much listener participation as possible, so, please, send us your name and address, and we'll send you a transcript of this program, our questionnaire, and a stamped envelope to send the questionnaire back in. You can help us make OPTIONS IN EDUCATION better by telling us what you think.

BLAIR: Send us your name and address. Write to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

MERROW: The address again: National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

BLAIR: If you just want a transcript, send 25 cents. A cassette costs $4.00, but we'd rather have your time than your money.

MERROW: Reports for this program came from KCCM, Moorhead, Minnesota; WKSU, Kent, Ohio; and WBEZ, Chicago.

(MUSIC)

CHILD: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of the Institute for Educational Leadership at the George Washington University and National Public Radio.

(MUSIC)

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BLAIR: This program is produced by Midge Hart. The Executive Producer is John Merrow; the Associate Producer, Jo Ellyn Rackleff. For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION I'm Wendy Blair.

(MUSIC)

CHILD: This is NPR - National Public Radio.

RESOURCE LIST - FANTASY MAGAZINE

BETTELHEIM, Bruno -- The Uses of Enchantment
New York, Knopf, 1976

JACKSON, Shirley -- 9 Magic Wishes
New York, Crowell-Collier Press, 1963

SAROYAN, William -- Me
New York, Crowell-Collier Press

WILBER, Richard -- Loudmouse
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